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## CNN RELIABLE SOURCES

White House Blocks Some News Outlets from Briefing; "New York Times" Editor on Why the Truth Matters; Trump Targets Anonymous Sources as "Fake News"; How to Best Fact-Check Politicians; Interview with Kevin Riley of "The Atlanta Journal-Constitution". Aired 11a-12p ET

Aired February 26, 2017 - 11:00 ET

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED.

[11:00:10] BRIAN STELTER, CNN ANCHOR: Hey, I'm Brian Stelter. And it's time for RELIABLE SOURCES. This is our weekly look at the story behind the story, about how the media really works, how the news gets made.

We're live at CNN Center in Atlanta this morning, getting a view of political coverage from outside the New York, D.C. corridor. The editor of "The Atlanta Constitution" will offer a local perspective, coming up.

Plus, the leader of "The New York Times" newsroom. With President Trump tweeting this morning about the paper of record, Dean Baquet is here for an exclusive interview.

And later, are reporters fact-checking Trump the wrong way? A world renowned linguist will join me for the different approach. I wanted to hear what he says and see if you agree.

But, first, President Trump's anti-media words are now starting to translate to actions. On Friday, when Sean Spicer was holding a press gaggle, he blocked reporters from CNN and other outlets from attending. A move that was surprising for even the most experienced White House reporters. CNN said in a statement, we will keep reporting regardless.

Saturday, President Trump said he's going to skip the White House Correspondents' Association dinner. You see him there at the dinner in 2011. He hasn't been since.

So, what he's doing is, with his words and actions, doubling down on the idea that you can't trust us. He's offering a new track from his broken record of media attacks, including with this tweet that I thought really stood out. He said, "Fake news media knowingly doesn't tell the truth. It's a great danger to our country. The failing New York Times has become a joke. Like wise CNN, sad."

Well, you know what's not sad? My panel. Here this morning with a wide range of views to break this down. Joining me here in Atlanta, Amy Kremer, a co-chair for Women Vote

Trump. You saw her on television all throughout the campaign. She's now a candidate running in the special election to represent the sixth congressional district of Georgia. Now, in Washington, Tara Palmeri, White House correspondent for "Politico" and contributor for CNBC. Also with us, Bret Stephens, editorial page editor for "The Wall Street Journal". And Will Bunch, a columnist for "The Philly Daily News". He's the author of "The Bern Identity".

Tara, let me start with you. You were there in the White House briefing on Friday. You were trying to attend Sean Spicer's off camera briefing. Tell us what happened.

TARA PALMERI, WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT, POLITICO: Well, it started a little before that actually because we thought we were having an on camera gaggle with Sean Spicer in the briefing room but then we received an e-mail around 11:30 saying that it would now be an off camera gaggle and it would be in his office.

And sort of the rumor mill started going around. He said what does that mean? It's extended pool. Pool are the people who cover the White House in every single movement and they follow the president around as a way to send out notes to us who can't be there.

So, we went to the press office and we asked are we allowed to come as well. They said, we'll take your name down and e-mail you if you're allowed to be on. So, we were all waiting for this e-mail. Some got the email, some of us didn't. But we all thought, let's just herd in there and go in. This is a little crazy anyway. Maybe they

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movement and they follow the president around as a way to send out notes to us who can't be there.

So, we went to the press office and we asked are we allowed to come as well. They said, we'll take your name down and e-mail you if you're allowed to be on. So, we were all waiting for this e-mail. Some got the email, some of us didn't. But we all thought, let's just herd in there and go in. This is a little crazy anyway. Maybe they forgot to e-mail us. This just -- it's all very unusual.

So, as we were trying to make our way to Spicer's office, a deputy press secretary was saying to some outlets, absolutely, absolutely. Come on in. But CNN was barred, "BuzzFeed" was barred, "The New York Times", "Politico".

And I asked the press conference why is "Politico" not allowed in? Can I have a comment because I think I will have to write a story about this?

STELTER: Right.

PALMERI: She said to me, you're threatening me.

It was just a very odd response because obviously I wasn't physically threatening her but it was also, obviously, this is going to become a story. But then it got me thinking this is all by design, that they knew by blocking us, we would be paying attention to the story about how this is an infringement of the First Amendment and how they are trying to squeeze us out of the White House and briefing and instead of covering the story of the day is that the chief of staff Reince Priebus reportedly reached out to the number two at the FBI to ask him to kill stories about contacts between campaign aides and high level Russian officials.

So, that became the story of the day. The fact we were blocked out instead of the real story which Spicer did have to answer some questions to, but when you only bring in small group of people including some more friendly outlets Breitbart --

STELTER: Right.

PALMERI: -- "Daily Caller" -- you don't have others in the room to really fire away more questions. And that's why that matters.

STELTER: When you invite a channel called One America News Network, which is so small, it doesn't have Nielsen ratings, but then you exclude CNN, it's clearly a premeditated decision.

So, let me ask you, Bret, about this. Does this feel like part of a strategy by the White House?

BRET STEPHENS, EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL: Yes, this is -- it seems, I would call it Nixonian, except I think that would be unfair to the memory of President Nixon. This is an attempt to bully the press by using access as a weapon to manipulate coverage.

[11:05:04] And I think "The Wall Street Journal" put out a statement that was clear. If we had known what was happening we wouldn't have participated in that meeting with Mr. Spicer.

I think that's the right attitude for the rest of the press to take. That if the administration will try to boycott certain news outlets, then perhaps we should, as news organizations, return the favor to this administration.

STELTER: That's interesting. Tara, you're a "Politico", do you think that's going to happen at "Politico"?

PALMERI: Well, I'm sure that we'll follow the guidance of the White House Association, the White House correspondents association. I know that they're actually strategizing right now. But I was just thinking that these -- their team, their masters of distraction.

And this whole story became about the fact that we were blocked out. And I just thought, you know, this is a really big deal that they blocked us out. But let's not forget that President Obama also blocked FOX from their pool at one time.

And for now, we're still allowed into the White House. We still have our press credentials. So, I think that we need to also evaluate how hysterical to get about this.

STELTER: Absolutely. We should not hyperventilate about it.

PALMERI: Right.

STELTER: Absolutely. We should not hyperventilate about it.

PALMERI: Right.

STELTER: But on the other hand, here is how I view it. Access is taken away inch by inch. It doesn't happen at all once, press freedoms are not curtailed at once. It happens gradually. And what we're seeing here is a small step in that direction.

But I want to bring Amy in. Amy, you're here with me and, of course, you're now running for

office. Part of that kind of wave, I would say of Trump supporters seeking public office. I wonder how you view this incident and how Trump supporters view this incident.

AMY KREMER, CO-CHAIR, WOMEN VOTE TRUMP: Well, I think Trump supporters agree with what he is saying when he's talking about fake news and him lashing out at the media and whatnot. You heard him at CPAC and there are loud applause and roars when he made some of those comments.

I think the media shouldn't hyperventilate over this, that everybody needs to come down. I -- from my understanding, this has happened before.

STELTER: Nothing like this, though. Yes, when it happened with FOX, other news outlets stood up and the Obama administration did not continue doing it.

KREMER: Well, it has happened before. And my understanding is these gaggles happen all the time and the pool of reporters were in there. And that happens when he's traveling too. The press pool, not everybody has access when he's traveling.

STELTER: So, you think it's OK to have the president and the administration support favorable friendly conservative outlets and block out CNN?

KREMER: No. I don't think that -- I mean, I think the media needs to have access because we the people need to know what's going on. But for whatever reason they did this in his office and it is smaller room, they say, and not everybody can fit in. Now, I mean --

STELTER: I think you should make room for big outlets. But I think what you're saying is, you hear the cheers at CPAC, his supporters, his voters are with him in these battles in the media.

KREMER: Yes, they are. They are. I mean, look, it's not necessarily wrong reporting but things that were omitted, there'd been, according to Media Research Center, there'd been 16 stories that have been done since he was elected that were false. Fake stories.

STELTER: Out of what, tens of thousands of news stories?

KREMER: Yes, but still -- I mean, I think part of it is people rushing to get it right in the day of the internet and social media. Everybody wants the first clicks. I think that it's more important to take your time and get it right than get it wrong.

STELTER: There were mistakes made last night when the president went to one of his hotels in D.C. for dinner, there was misreporting on Twitter about that. It was cleaned up, but there were mistakes made. So, I'm with you on mistakes but at the same time, I look at what he's doing on Friday and say, we're inching in a difficult direction.

You know, "The Washington Post" editor Marty Baron said Trump is heading down an undemocratic path. Do you feel that?

KREMER: I don't feel that. You still have access and I think you will continue to have access. I know that people are upset about the White House Correspondents Dinner. But you know what? The president goes there to get mocked.

He doesn't need to go to that dinner. He's mocked all the time. Look at every Saturday night with "Saturday Night Live". At some point, it must get old and I can understand that.

He just -- I mean, if it's not -- if he doesn't feel genuine and want to be there, then why should he pretend?

STELTER: The dinner, though, is also about scholarships. So, let me bring in Will Bunch to this conversation.

Will, your take for Trump to skip the dinner and to announce it two months ahead of time.

just -- I mean, if it's not -- if he doesn't feel genuine and want to be there, then why should he pretend?

STELTER: The dinner, though, is also about scholarships. So, let me bring in Will Bunch to this conversation.

Will, your take for Trump to skip the dinner and to announce it two months ahead of time.

WILL BUNCH, COLUMNIST, DAILY NEWS: Well, look, I think somebody on Twitter compared it to the famous "Seinfeld" episode when George said, you know, I'm breaking up with you. I think a lot of journalists and news organizations were getting ready to drop out of the White House Correspondents Dinner and I think in a way, this was a preemptive action by Trump, preemptive strike to, you know, take control of the issue.

I mean, you know, I think in a weird way, I think Trump may have done the media a favor because it's definitely time to rethink the White House Correspondents' dinner.

I certainly agree with you, Brian, I think -- you know, I think drip by drip, this campaign against the media is real threat to American democracy.

[11:10:07] I think April 29th would be a great day for the media to take steps to call attention to what's going on here, you know, instead of a glitzy dinner with the red carpet, I would love to see a candle light vigil for the journalists around the world who, you know, have lost their lives or been in prison on behalf of press freedom. I'd like to see, you know, a teach-in just about just how serious some of the threats to the First Amendment that are going on right now are.

I mean, I think -- you know, I think this should be day to celebrate the First Amendment with or without Donald Trump.

STELTER: Let me make one more point before we go to break, showing the headline from Axios, which is breaking the news that Breitbart is getting an interview with Trump this week. "Fox and Friends" also having an interview with the president in the coming days.

Tara, this suggests a strategy to seek out friendly outlets for interviews. Have you been able to interview President Trump yet?

PALMERI: Unfortunately, "Politico" has not had their shot. But if the president is watching, I would love to interview you as well. I just wanted to make the point, though, that the attack on the media

is really kind of creating a level of confusion for people who are in the middle ground and they don't really know what's fake news and what's not. I -- after my brother, he's 20 years old, he's in college and he read that "Politico" was blocked from the briefing. He asked me, are you fake news?

I mean, the fact he's wondering what's real and what's not is a problem. The fact that people are confused is what's the problem right now. They don't know because there is a predisposition to believe the president.

And I think that creating the press of the opposition party is really just confusing people who are -- don't know who to believe.

KREMER: Can I say one thing?

STELTER: Yes, Amy, go ahead.

KREMER: It's not just the president, though. I mean, it's other stories like "The Washington Post" and, you know, the electric grid. I mean -- so it's not just the president. There are other fake stories too that have been --

STELTER: You say fake stories. I say mistakes.

KREMER: OK, mistakes. They need to be corrected and I do think --

STELTER: And they are.

KREMER: It needs to slow down and slow down and get it right instead of being first one out there.

STELTER: Amy, stick around.

I'm going to say good-bye to Tara. Tara, thank you for being here.

STELTER: Amy, stick around.

I'm going to say good-bye to Tara. Tara, thank you for being here.

Everybody else come back in a few minutes, because up next, we have an exclusive interview with editor of one of Trump's favorite targets, Dean Baquet, the executive editor, is standing. He'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[11:16:10] STELTER: Welcome back.

Let me show you a great example of Trump's fixation with cable news and his use of Twitter to react. Tonight, "The New York Times" debuts its first ever Oscar's ad. Take a look here. It's all about truth and with the aim of signing you up as a subscriber to "The Times".

Now, I talked about this ad on CNN at 6:34 a.m. this morning, with CNN's Victor Blackwell on "NEW DAY". Exactly eight minutes later, the president tweeted this, calling out the failing "New York Times" for running the ad.

What do you think? A coincidence or was he watching CNN? You decide. "The Times" has been one of the president's favorite targets. In

fact, he's tweeted about the NYT, labeling it failing 53 times, clearly trying to get that nickname to stick.

So, joining me now is the head of that newsroom, Dean Baquet, the executive editor of "The New York Times".

And let's clear it up right away, Dean. Is "The Times" failing? Why does he say it? What are the facts?

DEAN BAQUET, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, THE NEW YORK TIMES: We're not failing at all. In fact, our digital subscriptions are going through the roof. Even print subscriptions are up. We're a profitable company. We're a news room that's hiring. I mean, we're big, vibrant, important newsroom.

I think -- I think the reason he goes after us, to be frank, is I have to say, I think there's an effort by this administration to minimize the press.

STELTER: Minimize.

BAQUET: To push -- yes. I think that their goal is just evident, is to make it so there's a handful of independent institutions whose job it is, and we're among them, to critique the president, to hold the president accountable. The judiciary is in the same batch.

I think if you look at the pattern of the president's tweets, they're designed to minimize the institutions who are charged with holding him accountable. I think that's dangerous.

STELTER: Do you -- do you think these are authoritarian tendencies the way some outsiders have suggested they are?

BAQUET: I'm not going to go that far. I'm going to hold onto my newsroom hat of not characterizing things that way. But I think it's troublesome. I think it's dangerous.

I think it means that all the institutions including the press and particularly "The New York Times" whose job it is to ask hard questions, if he continues doing what he's doing, he's attempting to make that harder to do.

It will not be harder to do inside our newsrooms. We're going to ask hard questions. We're going to continue to be tough analysts and reporters about the Trump administration and its actions, fair and tough analysts. But I think he clearly wants to convince his supporters that we're not to be trusted. And he's wrong.

STELTER: When he tweets about your company, does that help subscriptions? Is Trump the best thing to ever happen to "The Times" subscription strategy?

BAQUET: Trump is the best thing to happen to "The Times" subscription strategy. Yes. Every time he tweets, it drives subscriptions wildly. He also -- if I can say something he's accomplished, I think that there was a long time when the press wondered about its place in the society. The last several years as newspaper subscriptions sort of dwindled, as newspapers, particularly local newspapers worried about their future, I think what's happened in the last couple of months, I have to say, has been tremendous for news organizations.



something he's accomplished, I think that there was a long time when the press wondered about its place in the society. The last several years as newspaper subscriptions sort of dwindled, as newspapers, particularly local newspapers worried about their future, I think what's happened in the last couple of months, I have to say, has been tremendous for news organizations.

Our mission is clearer than it's ever been. We're covering a dramatic revolution in government and how the country is governed. And it feels like all the things that bothered us and made us lose confidence in last few months has sort of gone away. It's so clear what our mission is.

STELTER: I think a lot of Trump supporters were saying, why weren't you doing that for eight years when President Obama was in office? Why have you all suddenly discovered your mission?

[11:20:01] BAQUET: Well, I think that those supporters were not reading "The New York Times".

I mean, I keep using the example of Tom Daschle. And Tom Daschle for -- in the beginning of the Obama administration, Tom Daschle was the most powerful person emerging in the Obama administration. It was relentless coverage of him by "The New York Times", "The Washington Post" and others about the fact he still had a lobbying business and eventually, Tom Daschle had to leave the Obama administration.

We've been tough on all presidents. It's not -- this is not a new phenomenon. The new phenomenon is maybe we have a president who doesn't understand that that's our role.

STELTER: Let's look at something he said at CPAC on Friday. The president was talking about anonymous sourcing. So, we can cue something to the control, this is said what the president said about the use of sources.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: They just make them up when there are none. I saw one story recently where they said nine people have confirmed and I said, "Give me a break", because I know the people. I know who they talk to. There were no nine people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: Tell us, Dean, how anonymous sourcing actually works at "The Times".

BAQUET: First, I should point out that if you read the history of Donald Trump and his dealings with the press, including a story we publish today, he's been an anonymous source. He's been an anonymous source throughout his career, especially when it helped him and when it burnished his reputation.

STELTER: True.

BAQUET: Look, when you cover national security, when you cover the areas that we're working on, people cannot attach their names to them. Some of most important stories of a generation, whether it's "The New York Times" coverage of the NSA, whether it's Watergate, have come from anonymous sources.

These are not people who pull us aside because they want to screw Donald Trump. These are people who are worried about the direction of the government. These are people who are taking risks to talk to the media because they think these things need to be exposed.

And I have to say in an administration that has expressed so much distaste for the press and so much distaste for our role, are you surprised that some of the people who want to criticize the administration want to do it without their names attached? I'm not.

And I think that you will see more use of anonymous sources. I think we have to be careful. I think it's got to be on the most important stories, but, boy, are they important? We're in a different climate now.

STELTER: I remember working at "The Times" years ago. The public editors would frequently weigh in and say, we've got to limit the use of anonymous sources. Readers don't know whether they can trust.

Is that a particular problem now as "The Times" and CNN and "The Washington Post" continue to break news about the Trump administration's various communications with Russia but have to rely on anonymous sources?

BAQUET: I think what we have to do is be really careful. We have to make sure -- I always know who the sources are for these stories. That's why I'm so confident



Is that a particular problem now as "The Times" and CNN and "The Washington Post" continue to break news about the Trump administration's various communications with Russia but have to rely on anonymous sources?

BAQUET: I think what we have to do is be really careful. We have to make sure -- I always know who the sources are for these stories. That's why I'm so confident pushing back at the Trump administration when they criticize the stories.

I think we have to be really careful, but I think we have to own up to the fact that we're going to be in an era as we have been before where anonymous sources are going to be important part of news coverage. And, by the way, as long as the stories are accurate, as long as the stories are true, which so far has been the case, and as long as we offer the right perspective, I think that's fine.

STELTER: So, you've had no stories where you've been led astray by these sources, where you've had to backtrack?

BAQUET: Nope. No, no, no. It has not happened in Trump era. We have been -- every story -- by the way, I should say, news organizations are flawed institutions. If we get something wrong, we correct it right away and we own up to it. And as long as you do that, I think people will believe that you're honorable in your use of anonymous sources.

STELTER: Dean, thank you very much for being here, Dean Baquet.

BAQUET: Happy to be here. Thanks.

STELTER: After the break, we'll bring the panel back and I'll share my thoughts on why president Trump is trying to redefine fake news. Stay tuned. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[11:28:23] STELTER: Hey, welcome back to RELIABLE SOURCES.

Our panel is standing by to react to Dean Baquet's comments. But, first, redefining fake news. That's the subject of my essay today.

President Trump's CPAC speech on Friday was all about us versus them, including when it came to the media. I heard him trying to delineate between good outlets and bad news outlets.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: So, I'm not against the media. I'm not against the press. But I am only against the fake news media or press. Fake. Fake.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: Fake. That word has gotten a lot of use in the past few months. Back before the election, you might remember, the media reporters like yours truly warned about the plague of fake news polluting Facebook and Google and Twitter.

Now, what we meant by fake news was this. This is classic example. Stories on made up websites claiming that the pope had endorsed Donald Trump during the campaign. Many people were fooled by these fake stories. I've been snuckered a time or two myself.

Anonymous writers invent these stories either to profit from the clicks or to spread propaganda for a government. That's the media industry definition of fake news.

But after election day, Trump and some of his conservative media allies thought to redefine the term and they've largely succeeded. To Trump, fake news is any story, any network that he doesn't seem to like.

So, let me take a minute and translate Trump for you. Here is more of what he said at CPAC.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I'm against the people that make up stories and make up sources. They shouldn't be allowed to use sources unless they use somebody's name.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I'm against the people that make up stories and make up sources. They shouldn't be allowed to use sources unless they use somebody's name.

[11:30:05]

Let their name be put out there. Let their name be put out.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP) STELTER: Translation: Trump is incensed by reporting from "The Times," CNN, "The Washington Post," and other newsrooms, reporting using anonymous sources.

But faking a source is a fireable offense. When anyone at these places has to use an anonymous source, they vet the source carefully and get approval from their bosses.

But I think, when Trump says these things, we need to explain that to our viewers watching.

Now back to Trump.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: And they make up something else, and you saw that before the election -- polls, polls, the polls.

Take a look at their polls over the last two years. Now, you'd think they'd fire the pollster, right?

(LAUGHTER)

TRUMP: After years and years of getting battered.

But I -- I don't know. I mean, who knows. Maybe they're just bad at polling. Or maybe they're not legit.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: Translation: Maybe Trump wants his approval ratings to rise.

But polls are not fake. They are scientifically based. Now, some polls are better than others. And that's why CNN and other outlets have polling standards.

But polls are not fake news.

So, on Friday, when Trump ripped into CNN and other news outlets, FOX's Shepard Smith tried to correct him. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SHEPARD SMITH, FOX NEWS: In short, fake news is made-up nonsense delivered for financial gain.

CNN's reporting was not fake news. Its journalists follow the same standards to which other news organizations, including FOX News, adhere.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: Thanks, Shep.

So, I think you see what's happening here. Partisans are trying to redefine fake news as an insult, as a slur.

Rather than trying to reclaim the term, experts are suggesting we all choose our words more carefully, choose our terms more carefully.

So, I think you see what's happening here. Partisans are trying to redefine fake news as an insult, as a slur.

Rather than trying to reclaim the term, experts are suggesting we all choose our words more carefully, choose our terms more carefully.

This weekend at a conference all about misinformation, Claire Wardle said there's a spectrum of fake stuff out there. Check this out.

Over on the left, you see satire, like "The Daily Show" and The Onion, not intending to hurt anybody.

And then, on the right side, these are the worst of all, fabricated content, 100 percent false stories designed to deceive and do harm.

Now, she defines fabricated content and that kind of stuff, that's what we've talked about when we say fake news months ago.

But as these terms are redefined and exploited for partisan purposes, it is complicated out there. And, as Tara Palmeri was saying earlier, people don't know what to believe.

So, back with me to talk more about this, Amy Kremer, political activist and co-chair of Women Vote Trump, in D.C., Bret Stephens, editorial page editor for "The Wall Street Journal," and in Philadelphia, Will Bunch, columnist for "The Philly Daily News."

Bret, what are you trying to do as a writer, as an opinion writer, an anti-Trump opinion writer, I might add? What are you trying to do to help the audience understand and differentiate between real reporting and actually deceptive, fake stories?

STEPHENS: Well, first of all, I'm deputy editor. I need to correct you before you give me a promotion.

STELTER: Hey, there we go. We're trying to get it right. Thank you.

STEPHENS: But, look, what I would like to do -- you might have added I'm a conservative writer for a conservative editorial page.

And one way I think we ought to go about our work is to ask ourselves, if President Obama were behaving the same way when it came to the news media or when it came to, frankly, stories of international importance, like his relationship with Vladimir Putin, what would my, some of my friends on the right have to say about that? And should we not apply the same standards?

We were all outraged when the Obama administration attempted to bully and muscle out FOX News from the pool, right? So, we should apply a similar standard when it comes to efforts to do the same by this right-of-center administration to CNN or other news outlets perceived to be left-wing.

We're all constitutionalists. I'm sure my -- my friend on the screen also is a constitutionalist. That also means a real respect, above all, for the First Amendment and for understanding just how important -- the importance that our founders attached to a free and unfettered press. When you heard Donald Trump saying that there should be no anonymous

sources, of course, this is an -- this is an effort to send a signal to people in government not to speak, or otherwise to risk terrible penalties.

We were critics of the Obama administration for its heavy-handed use of the Espionage Act to go after sources in government and the media. We should again apply the same standards for the Trump administration.

And what I fear I hear from a lot of people on the right is, they are giving Trump a pass for his fake news, for his constant perpetration of lies, while being savage about mistakes made by the press, which are in a different category altogether, not intended, as you said, to deceive.

STELTER: What you want is consistency.

Will Bunch, I want to show you another clip from CPAC on Friday, something the president said, some of his rhetoric, and then ask you about it.

Lets take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: And I want you all to know that we are fighting the fake news. It's fake, phony, fake

Let's take a look.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: And I want you all to know that we are fighting the fake news. It's fake, phony, fake.

(CHEERING AND APPLAUSE)

[11:35:05]

TRUMP: A few days ago, I called the fake news the enemy of the people, and they are. They are the enemy of the people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: Will, you wrote for "The Philly Daily News" that this language, "enemy of the people," that it has historical parallels.

Tell us about that.

BUNCH: Yes, absolutely.

If you look back, Brian, the last 100 years, you know, going all the way back to the rise of right-wing authoritarians in Europe in the 1930s, but follow a straight line all the way to Hugo Chavez in Venezuela on the left in the 21st century, and you will see that the first thing that authoritarian governments do is go after the media.

And there's been concerns about Donald Trump, going back to the campaign, that he was going to try and run the government in an authoritarian fashion. And I think, when he calls the press the enemy of the American people, I think he's playing exactly into the worst of what people feared from a Trump administration. You know, not to get too Orwellian here, but I think what's really

going on, big picture, is that the Trump administration and his advisers, like Steve Bannon, and Donald Trump himself, are in a war to control, what is the truth, that when they -- when they tell repeated lies, like about the murder rate in America, or even about little stuff, like the number of people at his inauguration, they are trying to create a scenario where they, and not the media, are the ones defining the truth.

And so tearing down the media is also part of the strategy. And some of it doesn't matter now, but, in the months ahead, there's going to be big crises. We are going to see his signature programs, like mass deportation, implemented over the coming months. And the truth is going to become more and more important.

And, just like Orwell warned in "1984," he who controls the truth is in control. And I think that's the big strategy here.

STELTER: I think maybe we should start a RELIABLE SOURCES book club.

But, Amy, I want to bring you in on that.

I mean, when you hear the phrase "enemy of the people," do you think that is as dangerous as someone like Will is describing?

KREMER: No, I think he -- look, he just wants -- the story is what he's done. He's a politician that actually is doing what he said he was going to do. And nobody is talking about that.

STELTER: What he has done that is significant to you? What has he actually done so far that is significant to you?

KREMER: I mean, the Keystone pipeline, Gorsuch, the regulations, I mean, the things that he's actually doing.

The media didn't elect him. The people elected him. And the people deserve to know exactly what he's doing. And when it's constant barrage of everything negative, not talking about what the administration is doing, the people tune out. They don't believe the media. And so he -- so he...

STELTER: Yes, I think the challenge we face is that, when we're fact-checking President Trump, it's perceived as being an attack against him.

KREMER: Well, so, what has he done?

STELTER: Yes, I think the challenge we face is that, when we're fact-checking President Trump, it's perceived as being an attack against him.

KREMER: Well, so, what has he done?

He's gone straight to Twitter, where there's no filter, and he can talk to the people. And then he comes out and has a press conference. He wants the people to know what he's working on, what he's doing.

And the people want to know that. The people want to know exactly what's going on. I mean, honestly, I'm tired of hearing about all this. I'm really tired of it.

And I know other people are tired of it too. I mean, let's talk about what's going to get this country back on track and create jobs and the economy. That's what people care about. That's what people want to talk about. They're not talking about all this stuff.

STELTER: Amy, great to be -- see you. Thank you for being here.

KREMER: Thank you.

STELTER: Good to see you in person.

Bret, thank you as well.

Will, thank you very much.

Quick break here, but a quick plug also for our nightly newsletter. Go to [RELIABLESOURCES.com](https://reliablesources.com). You can sign up right now. I'm going to send out a special edition after the Oscars tonight.

Coming up next here: fact-checking. That's what we're talking about, fact-checking the president and other politicians. My next guest says there's an entirely better way to do it. Hear about it right after the break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[11:43:05]

STELTER: Hey. Welcome back to RELIABLE SOURCES.

Now, we have been talking about President Trump attacking the fake news media at CPAC. But he did that while he was making claims that were fake.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Obamacare covers very few people. Take a look at what happened in Sweden. The place is packed. There are lines that go back six blocks. And I tell you because you won't read about it, OK?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STELTER: You won't read about it because it's not true. There was no six-block-long line.

But, right now, was the best, most effective way to fact-check a politician like Trump?

My next guest says, no, not at all. And his name is George Lakoff. He's a professor of cognitive science and linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley, now the director for the Center for the Neural Mind & Society.

George, what have we been doing wrong trying to fact-check the president?

GEORGE LAKOFF, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR NEURAL MIND & SOCIETY: Well, first of all, you do need the facts, but you need to know how to present those facts, because, if you just negate what he's saying, you're going to just strengthen him.

George, what have we been doing wrong trying to fact-check the president?

GEORGE LAKOFF, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR NEURAL MIND & SOCIETY: Well, first of all, you do need the facts, but you need to know how to present those facts, because, if you just negate what he's saying, you're going to just strengthen him.

So, remember, Richard Nixon said, "I'm not a crook," and people thought of him as a crook.

I wrote a book called, "Don't Think of An Elephant." It makes you think of an elephant.

(LAUGHTER)

LAKOFF: If you say, repeat what Donald Trump says and then negate it and say no, and then you repeat what he says and say it's false, what you're doing is strengthening that, because, in your brain, the neural circuits have to activate what you're negating it in order to negate it.

And that strengthens what you're negating. So, every time you negate it, you help the other side.

What you can do is the opposite. What Trump is doing in these cases is diverting attention from real issues, real issues like Russia, for example, like his foreign policy, like his business connections and on and on, lots of real issues that he's diverting attention from.

[11:45:00]

What you can do in reporting this is talk first about the truth about what he's diverting attention from, the real issues. Then go and say here is what he said in his tweet, because his tweet is strategic, trying to divert attention.

Then you can say, this is an attempt to divert attention from this, and it's false. Here is why it's false. Let's go back to the real issues, and you go on, with about 30 seconds on Trump, rather than all time on Trump.

The more time you spend on Trump on putting him out there, the more you help him.

STELTER: I will take an example from that sound bite we just played. We played the president talking about Obamacare.

So, you're saying the better way to handle this is to do the following, to say Obamacare supports 22 million people, but President Trump said very few people have Obamacare.

Is that the better way?

LAKOFF: Well, the fact is that it's false. And what he's trying to do is divert attention from the truth again.

And that's exactly what you say. When you report it, you point out first, frame first, that Obamacare took care of 22 million people, more than were before, that attempts to get rid of it would get rid of care for many millions of people.

Then you can say, but the president, diverting attention from this, you -- said the following. Then you give his quote and you say, he missed, of course, the fact that 22 million people is not a few number of people.

(CROSSTALK)

STELTER: And just to prove your point, George -- yes, go ahead. Sorry.

LAKOFF: You frame first. You frame with the truth first.

Your job is to present the truth for the public good. And you do it first, because if he gets to frame it first, that's how people understand the situation.

STELTER: Professor, great to have you here today. Thank you very much for this unique approach.

LAKOFF: Great



Your job is to present the truth for the public good. And you do it first, because if he gets to frame it first, that's how people understand the situation.

STELTER: Professor, great to have you here today. Thank you very much for this unique approach.

LAKOFF: Great.

STELTER: Up next here on RELIABLE SOURCES, the editor of "The Atlanta Journal-Constitution" here in his hometown talking about Trump coverage outside the bubble.

We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[11:51:18]

STELTER: Welcome back to RELIABLE SOURCES.

President Trump has a long list of grief answers when it comes to his press cover range, and chief among them, tone. He and his supporters claim they cannot get fair coverage from the likes of "The New York Times" or CNN.

So, I wanted to take advantage of being here in Atlanta this week at CNN Center in a state that voted for President Trump to see if the coverage outside the D.C.-New York corridor has been any different, has been any friendlier.

I have the perfect person to ask here.

Joining me, Kevin Riley. He's the top editor of "The Atlanta Journal- Constitution."

Kevin, great to see you.

KEVIN RILEY, EDITOR, "THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION": Good to be with you here, Brian.

I trust you have had a great weekend here in Atlanta.

STELTER: I have. I have.

I was at the Civil Rights Museum yesterday reading about one of your predecessors. McGill is his name, a really important figure in this city during the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

I wonder now, more than 50 years later, what is your role? How do you view your role as the editor of the one of the biggest metro papers in the country?

RILEY: Well, one of the best parts of being editor of "The Atlanta Journal-Constitution" and for all us who work there is the long tradition of reporting on important matters as the world changed and Atlanta changed with it.

And we look to McGill for inspiration. I have read his biography. I have studied him. And, believe me, these days, we really need that kind of inspiration.

STELTER: Yes. Why's that?

RILEY: Well, I think that he lived and worked in confusing times, just as we did.

It was a different kind of thing. But he felt his way along as the nation was wrestling with the civil rights era. And when you read up on him, you find that he worked hard at it. He didn't have it right every day, but he certainly worked to serve his readers.

And that's what we're doing today in the middle of all of this. The tone of our coverage around all of this Trump stuff is really, really guided by research we do with our readers.

And that's what we're doing today in the middle of all of this. The tone of our coverage around all of this Trump stuff is really, really guided by research we do with our readers.

STELTER: Research.

RILEY: Right. We know what our readers expect of us. And they expect us to give both sides, to dig out the facts.

And, most important of all, we know that they see us as the most reliable source of information, especially in-depth information. So what we try to do is get out there in Georgia and find out and reporting on, how are these policies actually playing out in Georgia? How are they affecting real people?

Because we really can't get caught up in some of what's going on in Washington, because our readers don't expect that from us.

STELTER: In this divided country, are you getting more complaints from readers these days or, I don't know, maybe more compliments?

RILEY: We're getting both all the time, I mean, as you might imagine.

STELTER: OK.

RILEY: Some people -- I think we will always find some people at the extremes, but, for the most part, Georgians are regular Americans who expect their president to serve them.

They expect their folks in Washington to serve them. And in the end, they want to know if they are. STELTER: I find every week on this program, we're talking about attacks against the media. We're also talking about media screwups and missteps.

Are you finding that young people want to enter the profession? Are they sending you resumes, or maybe less nowadays?

RILEY: I'm going to be talking to some students tomorrow at Washington and Lee University, where a close friend of mine teaches.

And what I find is that students are tremendously interested in working in the media.

STELTER: They're not scared off by Trump's attacks or by all the complaints, no?

RILEY: No. I think they find the work interesting. They are all very media-savvy.

I hate to say this, but I think they're probably a lot smarter than we were when we were in school.

(LAUGHTER)

RILEY: And I think that there's also a lot of opportunity now in the media.

I think all that's going on now in Washington, for a regional paper like "The Atlanta Journal-Constitution," presents a historic opportunity to really explain what's going on.

And so let me give you an example of something. One of our reporters wrote about this, this morning. And it's the story of the Vidalia onion. And I know you're a renaissance guy, so you probably cook with Vidalia onions, right?

(LAUGHTER)

RILEY: But the point is this.

Vidalia onions will have to be harvested probably around mid-April. And it's a story that involves immigration policy.

[11:55:03]

Vidalia onions will have to be harvested probably around mid-April. And it's a story that involves immigration policy.

[11:55:03]

STELTER: Oh.

RILEY: Because those farmers in Southern Georgia have often had to depend on immigrants to harvest those crops.

STELTER: That's a way into the story that's local and personal.

RILEY: Absolutely.

STELTER: Yes.

RILEY: So, what's the truth on the ground? That's the story we will be pursuing.

Does the new policy and approach the president take, has it made Georgia safer? Has it satisfied Georgians that the law's being enforced? But what about the farmers in South Georgia? Are they going to be able to harvest their crops?

STELTER: And people need that local reporting.

RILEY: Absolutely. They count on it from us.

STELTER: Kevin, great to see you. Thanks for being here.

RILEY: Good to see you. Thanks for having me.

STELTER: We're out of time here on TV, but sign up at [RELIABLESOURCES.com](https://reliablesources.com) for our newsletter.

And, as we go this week, a note about Alan Colmes, a FOX News original who passed away this week after a brief illness. He was 66.

And, like so many others, I always admired Alan's kindness, both on the air at FOX and off.

Thanks for tuning in this week.

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STELTER: And people need that local reporting.

RILEY: Absolutely. They count on it from us.

STELTER: Kevin, great to see you. Thanks for being here.

RILEY: Good to see you. Thanks for having me.

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